Statement on the Death of Lewis Puller
May 12, 1994

I am saddened by the death of my friend Lewis Puller, who served his country with honor and distinction. As the son of America's most decorated Marine veteran of World War II and a winner of the Pulitzer Prize for his moving story of his personal struggle, "Fortunate Son," Lewis Puller was a true American hero. His death reminds us all of the grief that still haunts so many of America's veterans today, of the wounds that never heal, and the loved ones left behind.

My most memorable moment with Lewis was on Memorial Day a year ago at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, when he appeared at that ceremony unexpectedly and wheeled himself up next to me on the platform. I want his wife, Toddy, and his children, Lewis and Maggie, to know that it was an honor for me to be by his side on that day, and as Memorial Day approaches again, Lewis will hold a special place in my thoughts and prayers.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Convention and Protocols on Conventional Weapons Restrictions
May 12, 1994

To the Senate of the United States:

I transmit herewith, for the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed To Be Excessively Injurious or To Have Indiscriminate Effects (the Convention), and two accompanying Protocols on Non-Detectable Fragments (Protocol I) and on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Devices (Protocol II). Also transmitted for the information of the Senate is the report of the Department of State with respect to the Convention and its Protocols.

The Convention was concluded at Geneva on October 10, 1980, was signed by the United States on April 8, 1982, and entered into force on December 2, 1983. More than 30 countries have become Party to the Convention. It constitutes a modest but significant humanitarian effort to protect the victims of armed conflict from the effects of particular weapons. It will supplement prohibitions or restrictions on the use of weapons contained in existing treaties and customary international law, including the prohibition on the use in war of chemical and bacteriological weapons in the Geneva Protocol of June 17, 1925. It will provide a basis for effective controls on the widespread and indiscriminate use of landmines, which have caused widespread civilian casualties in recent conflicts.

The Convention and its Protocols restrict, for humanitarian reasons, the use in armed conflicts of three specific types of conventional weapons. Protocol I prohibits the use of weapons that rely on fragments not detectable by X-rays. Protocol II regulates the use of landmines and similar devices for the purpose of reducing the danger to the civilian population caused by the indiscriminate use of such weapons, and prohibits certain types of booby-traps. Protocol III restricts the use of incendiary weapons in populated areas.

The United States signed the Convention on April 8, 1982. Since then, it has been subject to detailed interagency reviews. Based on these reviews, I have concluded that the United States should become a Party to the Convention and to its Protocols I and II. As described in the report of the Secretary of State, there are concerns about the acceptability of Protocol III from a military point of view that require further examination. I therefore recommend that in the meantime the United States exercise its right under Article 4 of the Convention to accept only Protocols I and II.

I believe that United States ratification of the Convention and its Protocols I and II will underscore our commitment to the principle that

belligerents must refrain from weapons or methods of warfare that are inhumane or unnecessary from a military standpoint. I am also mindful of the strong sense of the Congress that the Convention should be submitted to the Senate for advice and consent to ratification, as evidenced in section 1365 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1993 (October 23, 1992, Public Law 102–484) and section 1423 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1994 (November 30, 1993, Public Law 103–160).

More specifically, by becoming Party, we will encourage the observance by other countries of restrictions on landmines and other weapons that U.S. Armed Forces and those of our allies already observe as a matter of humanity, common sense, and sound military doctrine. The United States will be able to take the lead in negotiating improvements to the Mines Protocol so as to deal more effectively with the immense threat to the civilian population caused by the indiscriminate use of those weapons. It will strengthen our efforts to encourage adoption of a moratorium on export of all anti-personnel landmines.

I therefore recommend that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to the Convention and its Protocols I and II and give its advice and consent to ratification subject to the conditions contained in the report of the Department of State.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
May 12, 1994.

Remarks at the Gallaudet University Commencement Ceremony
May 13, 1994

Thank you. Thank you so much for the warm reception and for the honorary degree.

I must tell you at the beginning that I have been deeply moved by the wonderful statements of your students, Jeanette and Andre. I think they have already said everything I could hope to say as well or better. And I wish only that I could say it to you in their language as well.

I'm delighted to be here with Dr. Jordan, whom I have admired so much, and Dr. Anderson, a native of my home State; with my great friend and your champion, Senator Tom Harkin; with many Members of Congress, including Major Owens, who will receive an honorary degree, Congressman David Bonior, Congressman Steve Gunderson, and your own Representative in Congress, Eleanor Holmes Norton.

I honor, too, here the presence of those in the disability rights community, the members of our own administration, but most of all, you the class of 1994, your families, and your friends. You have come to this extraordinary moment in your own life at a very special moment in the life of your country and what it stands for.

Everywhere, nations and peoples are struggling to move toward the freedom and democracy that we take for granted here. Our example is now over 200 years old, but it continues to be a powerful magnet, pulling people toward those noble goals. This week we all watched in wonder as a former prisoner stood shoulder to shoulder with his former guards to become President of a free and democratic South Africa.

Yet each day, across the globe from Bosnia to Rwanda and Burundi, and here in America in neighborhood after neighborhood, we wonder whether peace and progress will win out over the divisions of race and ethnicity, of region and religion, over the impulse of violence to conquer virtue. Each day we are barraged in the news as mutual respect and the bonds of civility are broken down a little more here at home and around the world.

It is not difficult to find in literature today many who suggest that there are large numbers of your generation who feel a sense of pessimism about the future. People in my generation worry about that. They worry whether young people will continue to try to change what is wrong, continue to take responsibility for the hard work of renewing the American community.

I wish everyone who is worried about America could see your faces today and could have heard your class speakers today. Our whole history and